

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6, 9, 10, 13 and 16 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended. The amendment introduces no new matter. Claims 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in those claims. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowability regarding claims 4-16. These claims are indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. The amendment to claim 1 is taken in view of this indication of allowability. Specifically, claim 1 is amended to include the indicated-allowable subject matter of now-canceled claim 14.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,732,971 to Stratico et al. (hereinafter "Stratico") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,657,530 to Kawamura et al. (hereinafter "Kawamura"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Without conceding the interpretation, or application, of the applied references, and solely to advance prosecution of this application, claim 1 is amended to include the indicated-allowable subject matter of now-canceled claim 14. The amendment to claim 1 obviates the rejection of claims 1-3.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-3, 6, 9, 10, 13 and 16 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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